

- Page 7 of 11 Pages -

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AUG 23 2006REMARKSIntroduction

The applicant appreciates the careful review of the application that the Examiner has conducted. We enclose herein proposed amendments and submissions in response to all objections and rejections raised in the Office Action.

Detailed Remarks☐ *Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112: Indefiniteness*

The Office Action rejects claims 6 and 15 as being indefinite, on the grounds that it is unclear whether the word "truss" designates a peripheral item on the body or simply the body itself.

The applicant respectfully submits that paragraph 50 of the specification provides clear teaching on this matter:

"[0050] For reasons including saving material and reducing weight, the body 40 might be constructed to form one or more apertures 48 and any such aperture 48 might form a grip to aid placement and removal of the coupler 20. For reasons including resisting deformation and damage, the body 40 and the apertures 48 might be configured to form a truss 50."

The applicant submits that this teaching overcomes the rejection and respectfully requests that the rejection be withdrawn.

- Page 8 of 11 Pages -

☐ *Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102: Anticipation*

☐ *Claims 1 and 10*

The Office Action rejects claims 1 and 10 as being anticipated by Schenkman. In particular, the Office Action asserts that Schenkman teaches:

"A third flange extending radially from body, perpendicular to first and second flanges (Fig. 3, the substantially flat portion extending from item 16)"

Claims 1 and 10, as currently amended, specify that the third flange extends radially from the body beyond, and substantially perpendicular to, the first and second flanges, as best seen in Figure 1. In contrast, Schenkman's third flange is circumscribed by his first and second flanges, which can lead to disadvantages as discussed in paragraphs 9 and 10 of the specification:

"[0009] One such type of coupling device is in essence a collar that snugly circumscribes the rim of at least one of two adjacent cans in a stack. In some such devices, the collar circumscribes both adjacent rims. In other such devices, there is also provided a square surface for the free can to abut and as the case may be either support or rest upon. In still other devices, there is also provided a flange for engaging the inside surface of the rim of the free can. By alternating cans and couplers, one can create a more stable stack of cans than by stacking the cans alone.

[0010] Despite their differences, these devices tend to suffer from certain common disadvantages. They are generally installed

- Page 9 of 11 Pages -

during the manufacturing or canning process and are not normally reusable by the consumer, but instead are destroyed when removed from a can so that it can be opened. Additionally, if a can, and in particular the rim of the can, has been dented, then the collar may not form a good coupling or may not engage the rim whatsoever."

The applicant therefore respectfully requests that this rejection be withdrawn.

□ *Claim 9*

The Office Action rejects claim 9 as being anticipated by Schenkman. In particular, the Office Action asserts that Schenkman teaches:

"Retaining the upper can in position by releasably engaging a portion of the inside face of the lower rim of the upper can, wherein the upper can is engaged with the coupler, similar to the configuration of Fig. 3.

Retaining the lower can in position by releasably engaging a portion of the inside face of the upper rim of the lower can, wherein the lower can is engaged with the coupler, similar to the configuration of Fig. 3.

Claim 9, as currently amended, specifies that such engagement is performed without engaging the outside face of the lower rim of the upper can or the upper rim of the lower can. In contrast, because Schenkman's third flange is circumscribed by his first and second flanges, both the inside and outside faces of the rims are engaged, which can lead to the disadvantages discussed in paragraphs 9 and 10 of the specification, as set forth above.

The applicant therefore respectfully requests that this rejection be withdrawn.

- Page 10 of 11 Pages -

☐ *Claims 2-6 and 11-15*

The Office Action rejects claims 2-6 and 11-15 as being anticipated by Schenkman.

The applicant submits that independent claims 1 and 10, as currently amended, are patentable over Schenkman. Claims 2-6 and claims 11-15 respectively depend from claims 1 and 10, and would therefore also be patentable.

The applicant therefore respectfully requests that this rejection be withdrawn.

☐ *Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103: Obviousness*

The Office Action rejects claims 7, 8, 16 and 17 as being obvious over Schenkman in view of Paul (US3,661,097).

The applicant submits that independent claims 1 and 10, as currently amended, are patentable over Schenkman. Claims 7 and 8 and claims 16 and 17 respectively depend from claims 1 and 10, and would therefore also be patentable.

The applicant therefore respectfully requests that this rejection be withdrawn.

Conclusion

The applicant believes that the amendments proposed and the submissions advanced overcome all of the rejections and objections raised in the Office Action.

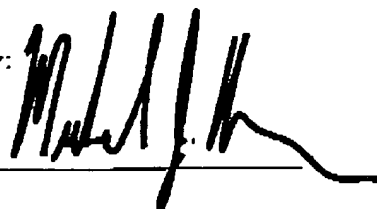
The combinations claimed in the proposed new claims all include at least one element not taught or suggested in the cited art.

- Page 11 of 11 Pages -

In view of these amendments and submissions, favorable consideration and allowance of the application are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

By:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael J. Roman', written over a horizontal line.

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